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# BULLETIN

OF

## THE PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM

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APRIL, 1916

FOURTEENTH YEAR

Number 54

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### CHAIRS RECENTLY PURCHASED

The Pennsylvania Museum has acquired six chairs of different periods, some of which are of considerable interest. The most important of the series, because it is such a fine specimen of its order, is a Charles II highback and very ornate chair of the pierced, wooden scroll type, usually with caned seat and back. While throughout the Stuart period chairs were made with solid wood panelled back, of the late Elizabethan pattern, from the time of the Restoration chair backs became more open, and pierced wooden scroll work came very generally into use.

The specimen here presented is remarkably well preserved. Moreover, at the center of the openwork strip forming the top of the back of the chair is a carved representation of the head of Charles II, such as frequently appeared in the industrial art of the time,—for instance, on a fine slip-decorated dish from the kiln of Thomas Toft, dating from about 1666 and exhibited in the collection of ceramics in the Pennsylvania Museum, on which the crowned head is given five times, in precisely the same general style as the carved head on the chair.

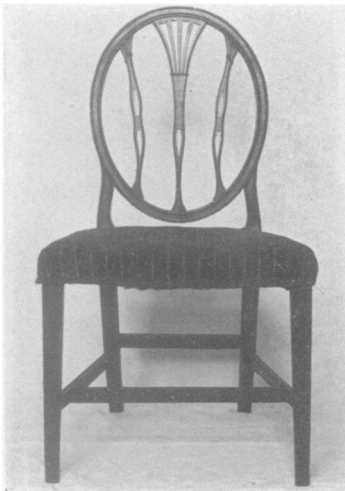
Next in interest may be mentioned a Spanish oak chair of the early seventeenth century, resembling the type sometimes called "Wainscot" chair. This is of the massive and somewhat clumsy style with heavy carved front brace-support joining the plain square legs. The back is also formed by a massive rail, carved in three square reliefs, the central feature of which is a smaller square ornament. On either side are squares filled with four small squares carved in relief. This rail forms the top of a façade, so to speak, of three Moorish arches, the light double pillars of which are turned, and rest upon another rail of plain grooved wood. With the above described exceptions, the chair is severely plain in line and ornament. A slab of wood forms the seat. In the Bolles collection, mentioned by Mr. Luke Vincent Lockwood, in his "Colonial Furniture in America," p. 22, is a child's wainscot-chair which in a ruder form recalls the arch-like back of the chair under discussion. The arch-like motive is repeated below, however, and the stiles rise above the back rail, in a manner



ENGLISH CHAIR  
Charles II Period



ENGLISH CHAIR  
Seventeenth Century



AMERICAN CHAIR  
Hepplewhite Style  
Inlaid and Carved



SPANISH CHAIR  
Seventeenth Century  
Carved Oak

that recalls the Italian and Flemish schools. Moreover, the specimen is crude and displays no carving. The wainscot-chair seems to have been in use throughout the seventeenth century.

Of interest to collectors of American furniture, is a Hepplewhite style American-made chair of the late eighteenth century, the light back of which is prettily inlaid with lighter wood. It is far less graceful in design and less richly delicate in execution than the English models of the shield-back style of chair in vogue at that period in the English-speaking world.

The fourth purchase is a turned chair of the seventeenth century, the seat of which stands abnormally high on its legs. It is possibly older than any of the above described pieces of furniture. Mr. Lockwood, in his monumental work, illustrates two types of turned chair which approach in a general way the Pennsylvania Museum's specimen and which he assigns to the first quarter of the seventeenth century. One is the Carver chair, the other the Brewster chair. The first type is so called from the specimen now at Pilgrim's Hall, Plymouth, said to have belonged to Governor Carver and to have formed part of the inexhaustible cargo brought over by that American Noah's Ark, the "Mayflower." While this (and other specimens of the Carver chair) presents the same turned stiles raised above the double top turned rail, as well as above the arm rails, as in our specimen, the back railing shows but three turned spindles, and none under the arm-piece, and these features seem to be characteristic of what is known as the Carver chair. As may be seen in our illustration, there are five turned spindles in our specimen, and the arms are supported by six spindles. The front legs also are thrice braced and altogether it seems to be better finished.

These considerations seem to place our turned chair rather in the category of the Brewster style of turned chair, the typical example of which, also in the Plymouth Museum (Bolles collection), shows four spindles in two rows at the back, and the same number under each arm rail, while two more tiers of spindles originally finished the sides and front beneath the seat of the chair. This specimen also is supposed to have come over in the "Mayflower" and to belong to the first quarter of the seventeenth century. But as neither of these types exactly corresponds to the above described typical specimen, although the latter embodies certain features of both, we may feel fairly sure that it is a later example, all the more so because the turning is well finished and the whole piece suggests a more carefully wrought product.

Another piece of furniture recently purchased is a very narrow refectory oak bench of the "escabeau" type, used with the long refectory tables, and very difficult to obtain, at least in this country.

A charming Sheraton chair, at the back of which is a medallion of an urn and garlands beautifully inlaid in colored woods, is also a remarkably interesting addition to the collection of English furniture of the mahogany period which is already quite rich in good examples.

S. Y. S.